

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

CARLOS WILLIAMS,

Plaintiff,

v.

LORI LAWSON, et al.,

Defendants.

CASE NO. C21-5536 MJP

ORDER DENYING MOTION FOR
SANCTIONS

This matter comes before the Court on Plaintiff's Motion for Discovery Sanctions. (Dkt No. 221.) Having reviewed the Motion, Defendants' Response (Dkt. No. 223), the Replies (Dkt. No. 225, 227), and all supporting materials, the Court DENIES the Motion.

Plaintiff Carlos Williams seeks an order of sanctions against Defendants with regard to their supplemental responses to several of his Requests for Admissions (RFAs). The Court previously issued an order compelling further answers (Dkt. No. 212), and Williams believes that

1 certain of Defendants’ supplemental responses are inadequate and therefore sanctions should
2 issue. The Court reviews the issues raised in Williams’ Motion in the context of each RFA.

3 RFA No. 3. Williams notes that Defendants’ response to RFA No. 3 “binds the
4 defendant[s].” (Mot. at 2.) The Court notes that there is no action to be taken and no relief to be
5 granted.

6 RFA No. 4. Defendants have now provided a lengthy response to this RFA, which seeks
7 an answer as to whether “Plaintiff was brutally assaulted at CBCC.” Defendants deny that
8 Williams was brutally assaulted, but admit that Williams’ assailant was given a “serious
9 infraction for aggravated assault.” (Dkt. No. 221-1 at 44.) As the Court interprets and construes
10 this latter part of Defendants’ response, they have admitted that Williams was assaulted. The
11 Court finds that no further action is necessary on this RFA, given that Defendants have provided
12 a full response. Williams may disagree with the response, but that alone is not grounds to order a
13 different response or sanctions. It is up Williams to convince the fact finder that Defendants’
14 responses are ultimately not credible or false. Sanctions are not properly issued, given that
15 Defendants have provided a complete response.

16 RFA No. 6. Defendants have now provided a more complete response to this RFA that
17 asks Defendants to admit or deny that “inmate Wallace was brutally assaulted at CBCC.”
18 Defendants deny Wallace was brutally assaulted, but admit that “an inmate started assaulting Mr.
19 Wallace . . .” (Dkt. No. 221-1 at 45.) Williams points to a declaration from Wallace himself that
20 appears to cast doubts on Defendants’ response. (See Dkt. No. 16.) But now that Defendants
21 have provided a binding response, it is up to Williams to convince the fact finder that
22 Defendants’ response is not credible or false. Sanctions are not properly issued, given that
23 Defendants have provided a complete response.

1 RFA. Nos. 7 & 9. Williams acknowledges that Defendants have now denied RFA No. 7
2 and admitted to RFA No. 9, but argues that their responses are false. Now that Defendants have
3 provided binding responses, it is up to Williams to convince the fact finder that Defendants'
4 responses are not credible or false. Sanctions are not properly issued, given that Defendants have
5 provided complete responses.

6 RFA No. 8. Williams' RFA No. 8 seeks an admission or denial that his "assailant was not
7 charged with any crime resulting from the brutal assault." (Dkt. No. 221-1 at 45.) Defendants
8 have now provided an admission that the Clallam County Sherriff filed a referral for prosecution
9 of Williams' assailant for Assault-2, but that the Prosecutor's Officer declined to prosecute for
10 the reasons set forth in a separate document Defendants identify. (Id.) Defendants' response is
11 not necessarily a model of clarity, but as the Court interprets and construes it, they have admitted
12 that Williams' assailant was not charged with any crime. The Court finds that no sanctions
13 should issue, given that Defendants' have admitted that Williams' assailant was not charged with
14 any crime.

15 RFA No. 16. Williams has served Defendants a revised version of RFA No. 16, and
16 Defendants response has not yet been presented to the Court. Thus, any motion to compel or
17 motion for sanctions as to RFA No. 16 is premature.

18 RFA Nos. 17 & 18. Williams takes issue with Defendants' denial of RFA No. 17 and
19 admission of RFA No. 18, but merely points to his disagreement with whether they are
20 defensible positions or not. Now that Defendants have provided binding responses, it is up to
21 Williams to convince the fact finder that Defendants' responses are not credible or false.
22 Sanctions are not properly issued, given that Defendants have provided complete responses.
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1 RFA No. 22. Williams disagrees with the merits of Defendants’ response to RFA No. 22,
2 but has not identified any failure to provide a complete response. Now that Defendants have
3 provided a binding response, it is up to Williams to convince the fact finder that Defendants’
4 response is not credible or false. Sanctions are not properly issued, given that Defendants have
5 provided a complete response.

6 RFA No. 32: Williams disagrees with the merits of Defendants’ denial of RFA No. 32,
7 but has not identified any failure to provide a complete response. Now that Defendants have
8 provided a binding response, it is up to Williams to convince the fact finder that Defendants’
9 response is not credible or false. Sanctions are not properly issued, given that Defendants have
10 provided a complete response.

11 RFA No. 33. Williams takes issue with Defendants’ denial of RFA No. 33, which seeks
12 an admission or denial that the “assailant of Plaintiff[,], Alex Burton[,], stomped on Plaintiff’s
13 head.” (Dkt. No. 221-1 at 51.) Defendants’ Response brief indicates that Defendants now admit
14 that Burton stomped on Williams’ head. (Dkt. No. 223 at 9.) As Defendants concede, they should
15 have made this admission earlier had they engaged in a more thorough review of the evidence.
16 Although that may be grounds for sanctions, the Court finds that the failure to investigate was
17 not done for an improper purpose and declines to impose sanctions. The admission now binds
18 Defendants.

19 RFA No. 34. In response to RFA No. 34, Defendants now deny that Burton jumped up
20 and down on Williams’ head. Williams believes that the video evidence contradicts Defendants’
21 denial. But now that Defendants have provided a binding response, it is up to Williams to
22 convince the fact finder that Defendants’ response is not credible or false. Sanctions are not
23 properly issued, given that Defendants have provided a complete response.

1 answers), the “requesting party may move that the party who failed to admit pay the reasonable
2 expenses, including attorney’s fees, incurred in making that proof.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 37(c)(2).

3 Though there are exceptions, the Court “must so order” expenses to be paid. Id.

4 The clerk is ordered to provide copies of this order to all Plaintiff and counsel.

5 Dated April 2, 2024.

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7 Marsha J. Pechman
8 United States Senior District Judge
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